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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000212

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/CACEN, EUR/ACE, DRL, PPD  
EUR/CACEN FOR EUGENIA SIDEREAS AND MARGARET PAWLICK  
DRL FOR KIMBER SHEARER AND WENDY SILVERMAN, G FOR  
G/IWI

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [TU](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: PM APPOINTS ETHNIC MINORITIES AND RELIGIOUS  
ISSUES ADVISOR

[1](#)1. (U) Sensitive But Unclassified. Please treat  
accordingly.

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) Prime Minister Andranik Margarian appointed  
Hranush Kharatian as Head of the Department on  
Ethnic Minorities and Religious Issues within the  
Cabinet. Kharatian will supervise GOAM programs  
targeted at the economic and educational development  
of minority communities. Though the influence of  
the new post is yet to be determined, Kharatian's  
appointment highlights a positive development in the  
GOAM's attitude to a long neglected issue.

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FIRST GOAM OFFICE ON ETHNIC MINORITY ISSUES  
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[1](#)3. (SBU) Prime Minister Andranik Markarian appointed  
Hranush Kharatian as the Head of the Department on  
Ethnic Minorities and Religious Issues within the  
GOAM cabinet on January 19. The appointment marks  
the first time since independence that the GOAM has  
set apart a government office for ethnic minority  
issues. Kharatian will coordinate GOAM-funded  
programs for ethnic minority communities including  
native language elementary and secondary school  
curricula, newspapers and culture classes. Comment:  
Past implementation of these programs has been  
spotty at best, and some point to Kharatian's  
appointment as a sign that the GOAM will now  
dedicate more attention to Armenia's ethnic  
minorities. End comment.

[1](#)4. (SBU) According to government sources,  
Kharatian's office will not deal with the  
registration of religious organizations. This  
function will remain with the State Registrar. The  
Prime Minister's Advisor on Religious Issues will  
continue to exercise a high-level policy role with  
respect to religion in Armenia. (Comment: It is  
still unclear how effectively Kharatian can  
influence policy across GOAM agency lines with the  
Prime's Minister's Advisor on Religious Issues.  
Appointing additional government personnel to work  
with religious minorities appears at least a nominal  
step in the right direction. End comment.)

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APPOINTMENT CAUSES CONTROVERSY  
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[1](#)5. (U) Technical aspects of Kharatian's appointment  
created controversy between the Prime Minister's  
Office and the Civil Service Council. The Civil  
Service Council decried the Prime Minister's  
decision to appoint Kharatian as a violation of  
Armenian Law. The Law on Civil Service requires  
this position to undergo a solicitation and  
transparent application process. The Council  
suggested revoking the Prime Minister's decision and  
announcing competition for the position. The  
controversy overshadowed the policy aspects of  
Kharatian's appointment in the press. Both parties  
have yet to reach a mutually acceptable conclusion.

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KHARATIAN: IV ALUMNI, AZERI SPECIALIST  
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[1](#)6. (U) Kharatian is one of Armenia's best-recognized  
ethnographers and authorities on Armenian ethnic  
minorities. News media often seek her opinion on  
cultural issues surrounding the Nagorno-Karabakh  
conflict and the movement of refugees. Kharatian

participated in an International Visitors (IV) Program in 2001 and has participated in a number of Embassy-sponsored roundtable meetings on national minorities. Kharatian previously worked as chairperson of Yerevan State University's Ethnology Department and served as vice-mayor of Yerevan in the late 1990's. She serves as president of the Armenian branch of South Caucasus Women's Dialogue and is actively involved in the Armenian-Turkish Women's Roundtable.